

Also, according to Putnam (MS), the Pygmy 313 •
never cuts a piece of wood larger than an inch
in diameter. He cuts wood to make his bows,
arrows, spear shafts, and ax hafts. The women
use saplings of no greater size to construct the
frames of the huts.

The material used by the Mbuti throughout 28
the forest is vegetable fiber. From this they
make the barkcloth that is their only clothing;
the twisted vine that makes their hunting nets;
the strings for their bows; carrying baskets and
tumplines; and the basketry caps mentioned by
Schebesta (1952, 173) who writes (1952, 125)
that he has also seen basketry quivers.

The Mbuti everywhere use the large phryn- 824
ium leaves that abound in the forest for roofing 342)
their huts, though when near a village planta-
tion they may use plantain leaves. Phrynium 45)
leaves are also used in default of villager-manu-
factured or trade utensils, for carrying water,
as cups, and pipe bowls. They use the juices of 386)
certain plants and barks for dyes for decoration
of body and of barkcloth.

Mbuti exploitation of the forest has no ad- 221
verse repercussions, as they move camp fre- 361
quently. Among the net hunters every month 184
or two is Putnam's estimate (1948, 335, 336).

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132 Where in the villages, and in the plantations that surround them, the midday temperatures soar well into the nineties, and the ground is covered with a dry, choking dust that quickly turns to mud, in the shade of the forest the world is cool and fresh, with only rare places, such as along river banks or at salt licks, where sunlight reaches the ground without first being filtered through a leafy roof. Also from the point of view of comfort, and of health, where village conditions lead to gatherings of flies and mosquitoes, these disease bearers are seldom if ever seen in the depths of the forest, except at such sites as are easily avoided. The Mbuti frequently compare their lot, in these respects, with that of the villagers, who in turn grudgingly admit to some advantages of forest life.

312 Another important contrast between forest and village life is in the water supply. The forest is interlaced with innumerable streams, any of which can be drunk from with impunity. A hunting camp is always located near a stream, but never stays in the one vicinity long enough to foul the water. A village remains in the same location, however, for three years or so, and the local water supply invariably becomes polluted. The villagers have some resistance to infection, but the Mbuti often have none and quickly become sick if they stay too long in a village.

136 But it is with regard to food even more than shelter or water that 262 the forest seems to favor the Mbuti. Throughout the year, without fail, there is an abundant supply of game and of vegetable foods. There are half a dozen different kinds of antelope that are particularly abundant, apart from supplementary sources of meat such as birds, monkeys, chimpanzees, and divers grubs and insects. The forest also [137] supplies a number of edible roots, notably the sweet *itaba*, and many different varieties of mushrooms, nuts, berries and fruits. All the latter may vary in abundance the one from the other, according to the time of year, but throughout the year at any one time there will be an ample supply, in both quantity and variety.

262 The only truly seasonal food in the forest economy of the Mbuti is honey, and it is of major importance in the diet. It is also of major [621] importance as a focal point in the constant process of fission and fusion that characterizes Mbuti society.

778 The apparent benevolence of the forest towards the Mbuti extends still further. The materials for the making of shelter, clothing, and all other necessary items of material culture are all to hand at a moment's notice. Firewood, equally, is everywhere in abundance. It is

THE GOOD DEATH OF BALEKIMITO

circumstances he could not have foreseen or he would not have been so cheerful. 122

For the first few days I went out with Kenge and others to the new "Pygmy plantation," to collect the poles and saplings for my house. The plantation was a chaotic tangle of fallen, broken, splintered wood. The Pygmies, armed only with their small honey axes, and a few bigger blades borrowed or stolen from the Negroes, had chopped the smaller trees down at about shoulder height, or rather less. The bigger trees they had attacked higher up, working from a flimsy frame from which they gnawed with their tiny hatchets like rats until a hundred and fifty feet of timber came crashing down. They had evidently caught on to the idea that if they attacked the big trees first, those, as they fell, would bring down a number of smaller ones, saving that much work. The result was that even they found it difficult to pick their way among the debris, and they had no means of clearing it. None the less, they had hopefully thrown down banana stems here and there, hoping for them to take root. Njobo proudly showed me one he had "planted," which was struggling manfully to raise its withered leaves above the debris into the sunshine. The only clearing had been done by Negroes, like myself in search of building materials. Evidently the Pygmies' enthusiasm for their plantation had not carried them very far. 313 • [23] [42] 313 245

The building of my house followed much the same pattern that characterizes every Pygmy endeavor outside the forest world. It began with a lot of noise and big ideas. Their own camp was built in the manner of a Negro village, mud huts in two lines facing each other. The huts were only about seven feet long and five feet deep, some without roofs, some without walls, none of them really complete. Larger families joined two houses together. Only Ekianga's was different, as might be expected. His house stood at the far end and ran across between the two lines, facing down the middle. It was about twenty feet long and had a fine wooden door that opened and 342 [361] 342 184

THE MAKING OF CAMP LELO

For an hour the

others lay around the fire, while I was pushed into a corner, and discussed where they would go to hunt the next day and which girls they would flirt with. They poked sleepily at the fire, sending up showers of sparks and filling the hut with smoke. In all the huts around us, families were chatting among themselves in a drowsy way, and occasionally some eavesdropper shouted a suitable comment, bringing a burst of laughter from all the nearby huts. The leaf walls keep out no sound at all, and anything said in an ordinary speaking voice can be heard four or five huts away. But before long the voices got sleepier and sleepier, and finally the only sounds were the chirping of crickets, the soft swishing of the already swollen Lelo, and the quiet falsetto of Makubasi as he sat outside his hut, all alone by a blazing fire. He held his baby son on his lap, and sang a lullaby, half to himself and half to the child. He was still singing when I went to sleep. ⁵¹⁹₅₂₁
₅₁₂ [533] [854]

The next morning the camp was up at dawn, and before it was properly light there was hardly a soul left about—only old Tungana, sitting where his son Makubasi had sat the night before and like his son singing to the baby on his knee. Kenge said that some of the men had gone hunting early, because they needed a lot of meat to begin the molimo festival for Balekimito and they did not want to start until they had plenty of food. The rest of the men and women were out cutting the leaves and saplings needed to finish building the camp. We went to join them, not far off. The rest of the day we spent making the simple furniture of a Pygmy household. ⁵¹²₈₈₇ [224] [065] [313] [314]

Sticks lashed together and bound by vine thongs to a frame make one of the most uncomfortable beds in the world. The sticks themselves are comfortable enough, but for some reason these beds are made so that each end bends sharply upward and however you lie on it the effect is worse than being in a badly slung hammock. Some Pygmies don't bother with a bed but just put the sticks on the ground and lie on them, or sleep on dry leaves. Tables are made ³⁵²₂₈₄ [513]

THE FOREST PEOPLE

000 Chasse as they were put through their exercises, all obscured the faint chirpings of crickets and birds and the chatter of monkeys.

361 And as the sun rose and began to beat down on the parched and
241 scorched earth, the village asserted once more its determination to
512 dominate the hostile world around it. The men went off to cut down
• [313] more trees for more houses and bigger plantations, and the women
went to hoe and cultivate the small fields so laboriously prepared,
which after another one or two years of hard work would have to be
abandoned. For the soil which can support the primeval forest with
luxurious ease refuses to bear fruit to the crops of the villagers for
more than three consecutive years.

361 In the neighborhood of the Epulu there were, in fact, several vil-
177 lages. Some twenty-five years earlier, when Patrick Putnam first
621 came to the spot and decided to settle there, there were none. He
built his home with the help of various men of different tribes whom
he took around with him to assist him in his work. Some were from
villages several hundred miles away. They called in other helpers,
and gradually the village of Camp Putnam came into being. A
pretty, straggling village, neat huts dotted haphazardly either side of
a gracefully curving track, just wide enough for a car to pass through
to Pat's home. Even though its members came from half a dozen
different tribes, it quickly assumed the characteristics of a traditional,
tribal, forest village. The family feeling that is so powerful where a
village consists of all the men of a single clan, their wives and chil-
dren, was replaced by a common loyalty to Pat, who worked day
and night in his small dispensary, saving the lives of the people he
loved and, in the end, giving his own. Pat acted as chief in nearly all
respects. Disputes were brought to him and he settled them, wisely
and justly, according to the tribal laws he knew so well. The village
began to attract Pygmies, who gradually attached themselves, again
in a perfectly traditional manner.

To a lesser extent this was so even with the new and distinctly

412 hole goes the narrow end of the ax.
[177] This is essentially a Neolithic type of
[439] hafting.

- [313] Perhaps the Negro will give him only the ax head, without a haft. In this case the pygmy will cut down a thin sapling, or a tree branch, just the right thickness, and use it bark and all. He splits this with his knife, at one end. Then he wraps the split and the blade which he has thrust through it with twine or rattan. The pygmy will use the Negro-hafted ax on the ground, but if he is climbing a tree and needs an ax while up there, he will take along one of his own hafting by preference, because it is lighter.

Both men and women use these axes. The women also have knives of their own, of the same manufacture. These knives are about six inches long, leaf-bladed, double edged. The handle is simply a thick tang, twisted, and thus is all one piece with the blade. In some cases, however, small wooden handles are added. The women use these for many purposes—for peeling bananas, and preparing other foods for cooking; to cut monocotyledonous leaves for roofing, and to split the stem. In general, it is the all-purpose woman's tool.

412 The man's knife is larger and single
199 edged, a kind of small machete, made
439 in Germany. The Negroes obtain them from white men by trade and give them to the pygmies. I once tried giving them American machetes, of the kind prized in Central America, but they were too large and too heavy.

412 The men use these machetes for cutting
[313] lianas, tree limbs, and so forth. For
[322] small woodwork, however, such as whittling an arrow shaft, they are more likely to use an arrowhead or spearhead, which is nearer the right size.

Axes and the two kinds of knives and arrowheads and spearheads are the only cutting tools the pygmies have or know how to use.

[P. 326-B]